NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS

Office of Communications

1100 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington DC 20506-0001
202/682-5570
202/682-5611 FAX
http://arts.endow.gov

NEWS RELEASE

Embargoed for Release:
May 27, 1999

Contact: Cherie Simon
202-682-5570

NATIONAL HERITAGE FELLOWS TO RECEIVE COUNTRY'S MOST PRESTIGIOUS HONOR IN FOLK & TRADITIONAL ARTS

Washington, D.C. -- Today, the **National Endowment for the Arts** announced the recipients of the **1999 National Heritage Fellowships,** the country's most prestigious honor in the **folk and traditional arts**. Thirteen fellowships, which include a one-time award of $10,000 each, will be presented to artists in twelve different states.

Among those chosen are a gospel singer from North Carolina, an Irish musician living in Pennsylvania, a Native American storyteller from North Dakota, a basketmaker from California, an Ozark fiddler, and a master boat builder from Maine. These performers and craftspeople, who represent a rich cross-section of America's many cultures, are honored for their achievements as artists, teachers, innovators, and guardians of traditional art forms. They join the ranks of previous National Heritage Fellows who include bluesman B.B. King, Irish stepdancer Michael Flatley, cowboy poet Wally McRae, and acclaimed musicians Bessie Jones, Doc Watson, and Bill Monroe. Since 1982, the Endowment has awarded over 222 National Heritage Fellowships. An awards ceremony and concert featuring the honorees will be held this fall in Washington, D.C. Target Stores is the corporate sponsor of the 1999 National Heritage Fellowship events.

Bill Ivey, Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts and a folklorist, said, "The Arts Endowment's National Heritage Fellows are outstanding artists and individuals who have dedicated their lives to preserving, reviving and celebrating this country's living cultural heritage. By proudly honoring their many contributions to music, dance, storytelling, and the creation of functional items of beauty, we also pay homage to the communities that have inspired and nurtured their work."

1999 NATIONAL HERITAGE FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENTS:

Frisner Augustin: Haitian Drummer; Brooklyn, New York
Lila Greengrass Blackdeer: Hocak Black Ash Basketmaker/Needleworker; Black River Falls, Wisconsin
Shirley Caesar: African-American Gospel Singer; Durham, North Carolina
Alfredo Campos: Horse-Hair Hitcher; Federal Way, Washington
Mary Louise Defender Wilson: Dakotah-Hidatsa Traditionalist/Storyteller; Shields, North Dakota
Jimmy "Slyde" Godbolt: Tap Dancer; Hanson, Massachusetts
Ulysses "Uly" Goode: Western Mono Basketmaker; North Fork, California
Bob Holt: Ozark Fiddler; Ava, Missouri
Zakir Hussain: North Indian Master Tabla Drummer; San Anselmo, California
Elliott "Ellie" Mannette: Steel Pan Builder/Tuner/Player; Morgantown, West Virginia
Mick Moloney: Irish Musician; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Eudokia Sorochaniuk: Ukrainian Weaver/Textile Artist; Pennsauken, New Jersey
Ralph W. Stanley: Master Boatbuilder; Southwest Harbor, Maine

- more -

1999 National Heritage Fellowships -- Biographies

Frisner Augustin: Haitian Drummer; Brooklyn, New York
-- is a master drummer, teacher, organizer, and cultural advocate who has become a principal musical ambassador of Haitian culture in the United States. With his group La Troupe Makandal, he has toured Latin America, the Caribbean, and many prestigious sites in the U.S. including Yale University, Lincoln Center, and the Apollo Theatre. Through his teaching at Columbia University, the Caribbean Cultural Center, and New York University, and with four commercial recordings, he proudly preserves Haitian cultural traditions.

Lila Greengrass Blackdeer: Hocak Black Ash Basketmaker/Needleworker; Black River Falls, Wisconsin -- is a superb Native craftswoman who has devoted more than half a century to the art of making functional yet beautiful black ash baskets and traditional items including moccasins, fingerwoven yarn sashes, and hair ornaments. For over three decades, she has unselfishly taught the techniques and symbolism that she learned from her mother and her tribe to other students and the public. Her work helps ensure that these traditions remain a living part of her people's future.

Shirley Caesar: African-American Gospel Singer; Durham, North Carolina
-- known as "The First Lady of Gospel," is a living musical legend who has received nine Grammy awards and numerous Dove and Stellar awards. Inspired by her father, a preacher and a gospel quartet singer, her achievements attest to her indomitable spirit and divine inspiration. At age 12, she earned renown as "Baby Shirley," and in 1958, joined the Caravans, the ground breaking gospel ensemble led by Albertina Walker. She later heeded the call to ministry, but continued to perform on Broadway and for the film soundtracks of the "The Preacher's Wife" and "Rosewood." With her creative genius, impassioned vocal delivery, and profound ability to move an audience, Caesar keeps the gospel tradition alive.

Alfredo Campos: Horse-Hair Hitcher; Federal Way, Washington
-- is hailed as this century's unsurpassed senior horse-hair hitcher, an art which is the most colorful, intricate, and prized of cowboy crafts. On his family's ranch in Arizona, Campos became fascinated with creating beautiful horsegear from pieces of rawhide, and with braiding traditional lariats. When he moved to Washington to develop special tools for Boeing jets, he did not abandon his ranching heritage and continued to perfect his technique. Campos's impeccable workmanship and the beauty of his quirts, headstalls, bosals, and reins have been key to a renaissance in the art form.

Mary Louise Defender Wilson: Dakotah-Hidatsa Traditionalist/Storyteller; Shields, North Dakota
-- has devoted her life to learning and sharing the stories that form her people's priceless "oral university." Much more than a pastime, these tales embody systems of belief and principles of behavior that shape the lives of people young and old. The fourth generation in a family of Standing Rock Sioux midwives and storytellers, she continues to preserve her knowledge through teaching, by serving as a board member for groups including Arts Midwest and the North Dakota Arts Council, and by producing a radio program to celebrate the Siouan traditions.

Jimmy "Slyde" Godbolt: Tap Dancer; Hanson, Massachusetts
-- called the "Grandfather of Tap" by his acclaimed student Savion Glover, Slyde has been a prime exponent of tap from vaudeville, to the 1940s Basie and Ellington swing bands, to tap's present day revival. He began dancing at age twelve, inspired by Bill "Bojangles" Robinson, and taught by Eddie "School Boy" Ford, Stanley Brown and others. He began touring with his partner Jimmy Mitchell, and later worked on television and in films including *Tap* with Sammy Davis, Jr. and Gregory Hines, *Round Midnight* and *The Cotton Club*. His performance in the 1989 Broadway version of *Black and Blue* helped spur his career and resulted in a Tony nomination. Like the masters who taught him, Slyde carries on the tap tradition by mentoring promising new artists.

Ulysses "Uly" Goode: Western Mono Basketmaker; North Fork, California
-- epitomizes the distinctive style of Western Mono woven basketry of central California. His work, which has been exhibited in the Crocker Art Museum in Sacramento, demonstrates the painstaking technique, eye for beauty, innovation within tradition, productivity, and commitment typical of revered Native American basketmakers. He is a prolific master weaver of the range of Mono basket types — cradle boards, twined seed beaters, cooking baskets, and conical burden baskets. Goode learned his craft from his mother and other relatives and, in turn, is an admired and respected teacher.

- more -

Bob Holt: Ozark Fiddler; Ava, Missouri
-- is a renowned and accomplished fiddler who for over fifty years has provided the musical backbone, heartbeat or "working rhythm" for dancing feet in the Ozark region and in Iowa, where he lived for a dozen years. Encouraged by his grandfather and his father, an enthusiastic dancer, Holt acquired a broad musical repertoire from friends and family and developed a full-gallop style of fiddling. His talents are much in demand at festivals and workshops around the country, and by passing on his knowledge to younger musicians, he keeps the tradition alive.

Zakir Hussain: North Indian Master Tabla Drummer; San Anselmo, California
-- is hailed as one of the world's greatest percussionists. A tabla drum virtuoso who is the son and disciple of the legendary Ustad Alla Rakha Khan, Hussain began his concert career at age seven, and he was touring by twelve. His technique, transcendent musicality, astounding rhythmic complexity, melodic versatility, and genius of balancing innovation with continuity, have spurred the meteoric rise of a career spanning four decades.

Elliott "Ellie" Mannette: Steel Pan Builder/Tuner/Player; Morgantown, West Virginia
-- is called "The Father of the Modern Steelband" for his key innovations, musicianship, teaching, and advocacy for the steel drum tradition. In 1937, at age eleven, he played his first Trinidad carnival. Later, he went on to lead the great Trinidad group, the Invaders, and become a member of the national steel band. A machinist by trade, Mannette's improvements on the drum and its tuning helped popularize it. In the 1960s, he developed the U.S. Navy Steel Band, worked with New York City youth, and started over ten new groups. Now, he and his company, The Mannette Touch, work with over 70 school programs and are a main source of steel band instruments. Mannette is also an Artist-in-Residence at West Virginia University.

Mick Moloney: Irish Musician; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
-- is an Irish Renaissance man who helped ignite a major resurgence of Irish-American music, dance and culture in the U.S. His many accomplishments as a teacher, producer, performer, and scholar include shaping the Irish component of the Smithsonian Bicentennial Festival of American Folklife, producing numerous festivals, co-founding the acclaimed Greenfields of America touring group that included dancer Michael Flatley, and consulting for the 1995 documentary *Out of Ireland*. Moloney is an outstanding tenor banjo player who also sings and plays mandolin, mandola, bouzouki, and guitar. He has performed on or produced over 50 recordings, including those of older musicians, and profoundly influenced many younger, successful artists.

Eudokia Sorochaniuk: Ukrainian Weaver/Textile Artist; Pennsauken, New Jersey
-- is prized nationally and internationally for her life-long commitment to preserving the rich tradition of Ukrainian textile arts or *nyzanka*. A farmer's daughter, she learned the complex process of embroidery, weaving, and fabric decoration from her older sisters. When her family fled Ukraine during World War II, she began collecting and preserving *nyzanka* patterns and examples. Since moving to the U.S., she has worked to save her heritage by creating elaborate costumes for her husband's music and dance group, demonstrating her work at festivals, and teaching in folk arts apprenticeship and school programs. Her skills and memory are a living library of Ukrainian culture. During a recent visit to Ukraine, she also helped teach many of the artistic skills she has so carefully conserved.

Ralph W. Stanley: Master Boatbuilder; Southwest Harbor, Maine
-- is dedicated to the craft of building wooden boats that combine beauty and utility. With his meticulous attention to fine workmanship, traditional process, and design, Stanley has built or restored countless wooden boats from lobstering vessels to racing sloops and pleasure yachts. Born in Bar Harbor, on Maine's Mt. Desert Island, he descended from a long line of mariners and learned his trade by watching local boatbuilders. Stanley has helped revive interest in the finely-made, graceful Friendship sloops -- single-masted sailing vessels developed in the 1880's in Friendship, Maine.

-- Longer Biographies Are Available Upon Request --